13. Uttaranchal

Sl. No.	Name of SSA	Number of uncovered villages
1.	Almora	1,380
2.	Dehradun	113
3.	Nainital	110
4.	New Tehri	502
5.	Srinagar	1,776
	TOTAL :	3,881

Provision of FAX/STD/ISD to Gram Panchayats

84. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a policy to cover all the Gram Panchayats of the country with public phone facilities including FAX/STD/ISD etc; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when the above facilities would be provided?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Government has formulated a policy to cover all the revenue villages including all uncovered Gram Panchayats in the country as per Census-2001 with Village Public Telephone facility including STD facility on these VPTs.

FAX/STD/ISD facilities are available in the exchanges and can be provided on demand.

The Government has also a policy to provide FAX/Internet facility in those villages where population exceeds 2000.

(b) At Present, subsidy support is being provided to Village Public Telephones already installed in about 5,20,000 villages. An agreement has been signed in November 2004 by the office of Administrator (Universal Service Fund) with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), to

provide 66,822 Village Public Telephone in remaining uncovered villages including Gram Panchayats within three years *i.e.* by November 2007.

Uniform billing code

85. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the telecom department is expanding and updating the dispute resolution mechanism in the wake of increasing number of consumer grievances against service providers;

(b) whether service providers including private telecom companies indulge in over billing through confusing technical jargons which are not comprehensible to layman consumer; and

(c) whether the telecom department will enforce a uniform billing code/format for all the operators to protect consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The dispute resolution mechanism to address the consumer grievances is reviewed and updated from time to time in State owned BSNL and MTNL. The items of the bills are being communicated in simple language.

There are a large number of private telecom companies which have their own dispute resolution mechanism and billing formats.

(c) Uniform billing code/format is not possible as it is a free market.

BPO facilities under threat from South Africa

86. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's stature as the number one choice for UK companies locating contact centres and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) facilities is under threat with South Africa emerging as a challenger;

(b) whether South Africa has edge in terms of huge supply of labour and being in the same time-zone as UK coupled with their fluent communication skills in English; and